

HUMAN EVENTS
4 February 1978

CIA Revamp Worries Intelligence Community

President Carter's January 24 Executive Order reorganizing the U.S. intelligence structure contains ominous news in its upgrading of CIA Director Stansfield Turner to near-czar status regarding specific and overall operations of both the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency, top veteran analysts maintain. They point out that, although the CIA is budgeted for only about 10 per cent of all intelligence operations funds, Turner will now be in a position to shape—to a heretofore unenjoyed degree by a CIA director—the intelligence initiatives of the other security agencies.

Turner's heightened position was emphasized in the Oval Office ceremony, during which Carter signed the order and Turner was photographed in chummy poses with National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. Thus not only were recent rumors of Turner's upcoming demise scotched, but he gained a significant victory over Defense Secretary Harold Brown. The two had been waging a virtually open battle over future control of the intelligence community.

Brown had taken his case to Carter, arguing that it would be a mistake to give any agency or individual a monopoly on intelligence estimates and operations. Last year Brown said that, "Although I think it is possible and proper to set up a centralization in some parts of intelligence... the estimating function has to continue to be such as to allow the expression of differing views at the highest level." Brown emphasized that too often he had seen the estimates of one agency or another proved wrong.

One source told HUMAN EVENTS that "in his upgraded budget director capacity, Turner will be calling the shots. He will have wide latitude to approve

or disapprove of specific projects; more than ever, he'll be a very powerful individual. Just how powerful remains to be seen, as there will be a great deal of infighting between Turner and the other agency people. The Defense Department is allotted about 90 per cent of the intelligence budget. But to a very large extent his upgrading means that he can say 'thumbs up' to project X or 'thumbs down' to project Y, and so on.

"Obviously when you control the budget, you can largely dictate how you want to direct your resources. You can go over your own and the other agency operations and pretty well call the tune."

Particularly agonizing and alarming to Turner critics are that this vast upgrading by President Carter (on the heels of strong rumors that Turner was in the President's doghouse and on the way out) comes just after last November's CIA purge of some 800 personnel, a very disproportionate number of "best and brightest" operatives among them.

That cut (HUMAN EVENTS, Nov. 26, 1977) slashed from the agency rolls some 25 per cent of those primarily concerned with the espionage and counter-intelligence facets of CIA's "cloak and dagger" operations. At that time we said that "The cutbacks will deeply wound the top ranks of the clandestine operations division, with a number of station chiefs throughout the world being axed. Many of those to be severed are among the most seasoned and knowledgeable in the agency; their

loss represents thousands of years of hard-gained intelligence savvy."

Former CIA Director George Bush told HUMAN EVENTS last November, relative to the CIA firings: "I can't pass judgment on this specific cutback. But as a matter of principle we should do nothing to further weaken our ability to collect human intelligence abroad." While not specifically criticizing the cutbacks, former CIA Deputy Director Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters has spoken out loudly in favor of gathering information from "human sources." These human sources, he said, can alone reveal intentions, absolutely vital in planning for defense of the country.

Aside from the decision to cut back, Turner's critics say he badly handled the firings, lowering morale needlessly by dropping many agents who were just a few years short of earning a pension.

Turner's so far sorry performance as CIA director is not all that bothers his detractors, who wonder why his ineptness appears to have been blessed by the Carter Administration. They are also worried because the CIA itself has been under increasing criticism in recent years for systematically understating the Soviet threat. Its estimates of the massive Soviet civil defense program and the sums of money spent on Soviet weaponry—accurately tracked by the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence

Agency and the Air Force's chief of intelligence, Gen. George Keegan—were far below the mark.

And the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, it is noted, asked a group headed by Prof. Richard Pipes of Harvard, former head of that school's Russian Research Center, to analyze the annual strategic estimates of the CIA. This group concluded in 1976 that the CIA had repeatedly underestimated Soviet capabilities.

Now, with a man of Turner's questionable judgment having greater discretionary powers over the operations of the NSA and the DIA, as well as

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